



# Woodward Public Schools

June 15, 2019

Dear Selection Committee:

John Quincy Adams said, "If your actions inspire others to learn more, dream more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." My good friend and mentor, Bruce Benbrook, is exactly the kind of inspirational leader that Adams is defining, and it is my honor to nominate Bruce for the Oklahoma Bankers Hall of Fame.

Bruce and I are both native sons of Woodward, so I have been blessed to learn a great deal from him over the years while cultivating a lasting friendship. As I stepped into the leadership role at Woodward Public Schools, Bruce was one of the first to not only offer his congratulations, but also, and more importantly, to give his encouragement and share his wisdom. Just as the Stock Exchange Bank is an anchor institution in this community, Bruce himself has always been a critical component of every effort and initiative to grow our economy, improve our community, and cultivate future generations of leaders.

Every year I hear the same speech from our bond advisor about how fortunate the Woodward Public Schools are to have Bruce and the Stock Exchange Bank, yet I never tire of hearing it. Like most schools, we rely on local community bond issues to construct and maintain facilities, replace buses and passenger vehicles, and keep up with the ever-increasing demands of ensuring our students and staff have access to updated, functional technology. Our bond advisor works with schools across the state, and every time we open bids to sell our bonds, we find that no other bank can compete with the generosity of the Stock Exchange Bank. Our most recent bond passed by our community was for \$29 million. When our financial advisors calculated the lease/purchase costs and interest, we based our construction plans on a specific dollar amount. Once we actually bid the sale of the bonds, the Stock Exchange Bank came in so far under the estimates that the bond actually delivered an additional \$1,000,000 for construction. That had a significant impact on our projects and what we were able to do for our kids!

Bruce's accolades and awards in the area of leadership are prolific both in our community and our state, so I am sure you are aware of his many achievements. However, you may not be aware of just how much he loves and supports the children and schools in our community. In 2000, he and the Stock Exchange Bank began the "Adopt a School" program, adopting Westwood Early Childhood Center where our pre-K and kindergarten programs were housed. We all know that the bank presenting a check for \$5,000 to \$10,000 to a school, although generous, does not require a lot of one's time and talent. But Bruce and his bank didn't stop with the check. He allowed his employees the freedom and privilege of going to the school weekly to work one-on-one with students, join in their activities, read to them, and even help the teachers with mundane tasks like making copies. After nineteen years, this program is as strong as ever, and the students and teachers have benefited in so many important ways from Bruce and his employees' hands-on work at the Early Childhood Center. Of course the financial support is greatly appreciated and allows the staff to provide more resources for their students every year.

Several months ago, I had a conversation with Bruce, during which he specifically asked me what the Woodward Public Schools really needed or wanted to do but just didn't have the resources to make happen. I told him about how my leadership team at the district and building levels had been racking their brains to find a way to implement an after-school program that would focus on STREAM (Science Technology Reading Engineering Arts Math) academic standards. We know we must find ways to broaden our students' knowledge of a wide array of disciplines and to extend their experiences in a way that is engaging and fun. We know we have a continuously growing population of dual income households with "latch key" kids who have little to do after school that we educators would consider of academic value or even productive. We also know for many students that when Mom and Dad get home, the first conversation is, "Did you get your

homework done?" This important, daily routine often sets up an opportunity for confrontation and angst that can set a negative tone for the precious few hours the family does get to interact.

To address all these goals, our vision was to implement Boomer STREAM, an after-school program where students could get the homework help they needed in a structured environment. This vision meant students would engage in meaningful, fun activities in which students would learn new concepts and skills, often without realizing they were even learning. And just as important as feeding their brains, we knew a nutritious snack would be needed. To do all these things, after four years of budget cuts, we simply did not have the financial resources to make our vision a reality.

About two weeks later, Bruce walked from the bank to my office and sat down. He said, "I had a dream last night about the after-school program you talked about, and I want to help. Can we get this off the ground with \$100,000?" That was truly one of the most humbling moments of my life. Just about three months later, Bruce and I walked through every elementary building in our district and observed firsthand that what was once just a vision was now a reality. We saw smiling students who were actively engaged in structured, hands-on activities. We saw teachers along with the high school student-aides who were having as much fun as the students. And I saw a man who was genuinely overjoyed to see the positive impact he had had on the children of his community.

Over one hundred years ago, my ancestors and Bruce's staked their claim to homestead on this rough, unforgiving Northwest Oklahoma landscape. Through bitter winters and blustery summers, they found a way to survive and thrive. I marvel at the tenacity and grit of those early settlers who paved the way for us, as we reap the rewards of living and raising our families in this community. What they have passed down from generation to generation is a cultural component that we now call the "Pioneer Spirit." We care about one another, and when we need to, we take care of one another. We work deliberately to ensure that our community endures for those generations that we will never meet. Bruce Benbrook is the epitome of that Pioneer Spirit, and both current and future generations will benefit from his leadership and heart for making the world a better place.

It is without hesitation or reservation and in the absolute certainty that you will encounter no better candidate that I recommend Bruce Benbrook for the Oklahoma Bankers Hall of Fame. I can attest that his passion for leadership, altruism, and kindness are simply unparalleled.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "K. Reynolds", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kyle B. Reynolds  
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June 10, 2019

Dear Oklahoma Bankers 2019 Hall of Fame Selection Committee,

Mr. Bruce Benbrook has demonstrated, in his more than thirty-five years in the banking profession, nothing but the utmost in professionalism and integrity. He has also lived a life exemplifying leadership and service to others. I have known Mr. Benbrook for more than thirty years and have worked with him on numerous committees and boards for the vast majority of this time. For more than four decades, his tireless efforts have benefited numerous causes as he championed a vast array of projects, civic organizations, and philanthropic issues, while giving unselfishly of his time and assets.

While Bruce has been tremendously successful in his professional career, he has always been and still remains extremely involved with civic and philanthropic endeavors both in our community and statewide. Locally, he remains a respected and dynamic presence in our most impactful civic causes/organizations, having served as president for most of them.

Bruce is passionate about education and its capacity to change lives and impact the future. In 2000, Bruce established the first "Adopt-A-School" program in Northwest Oklahoma when the Stock Exchange Bank adopted the Westwood Kindergarten Center in Woodward. Bruce and his employees continually provide individualized mentoring for students, while his bank provides financial assistance for school needs/student projects. He has, for decades, provided countless student scholarships, written multitudes of recommendations for student scholars, and personally attended the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence's award ceremony whenever a Woodward student was named an Academic All-Stater. In 1989, Bruce was a founding member of the Woodward Education Foundation, which, in its 20-plus years, has provided well over \$700,000 in teacher grants to fund special classroom projects, speakers, field trips, instructional materials, and professional development. He has received numerous local and statewide awards. Furthering and enhancing education opportunities for Oklahoma's children and young people have always been a high priority for Bruce.

Bruce is not just a pillar of our community; his endeavors have had a significant impact statewide. His past and current tenures serving on the boards of the Oklahoma State University Board of Regents, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, Leadership Oklahoma, Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and Oklahoma Hall of Fame exemplify his abilities as a respected, visionary leader. His service as chair for almost every board on which he has served is indicative of his fellow board members' confidence in him to lead with integrity, efficiency, and intelligence.

Bruce is the consummate volunteer. He is willing to lend a hand whenever and wherever needed. He serves with humility and quite often behind the scenes and away from the limelight. His philanthropy has facilitated the good works of numerous organizations and individuals while leaving a lasting impact for the better upon his community and his state. Recently, out of an earnest desire to help our local school system offer innovative, state-of-the-art programs while coping with depleted state funding, Bruce has made a very significant financial donation in order to bring an after-school program to the Woodward School District. This multi-discipline "STREAM" (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts and

math) program was implemented this past semester. It is a program available to all Woodward grade school children and is designed to engage students with hands-on activities that will enrich their academic studies and guide them toward meaningful, productive careers later in life. Working with our school district administration, Bruce has provided the financial resources that will, in turn, create a long-term, positive impact on the education of our children.

Bruce is a true community servant. He has constantly and continually dedicated himself to improving the quality of life for the citizens of Oklahoma. He generates confidence and respect wherever he goes. He is masterful at finding common ground and achieving consensus. He is humble and does not seek the spotlight. He simply wants to do good work and make a positive difference, and he has achieved that beyond measure.

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Mr. Bruce Benbrook for the Oklahoma Bankers 2019 Hall of Fame.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leah Barby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

Leah Barby  
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June 26, 2019

**RE: Recommendation for Bruce Benbrook to Oklahoma Bankers 2019 Hall of Fame**

To the Honorable Selection Committee:

It is a special privilege for me to write this letter of recommendation for such a deserving person as Bruce T. Benbrook for his selection to the Oklahoma Bankers 2019 Hall of Fame. I cannot think of a better choice for the Committee. I have known Mr. Benbrook for twenty-five years.

It was when I was selected as Director and then Dean of the Woodward Campus for Northwestern Oklahoma State University that I witnessed firsthand the high degree of leadership, trustworthiness, integrity, service, and caring spirit that makes up the character of Bruce T. Benbrook. His reputation as a banker, CEO, and community advocate is recognized statewide. As a Rotarian, we promote "Service above Self" and even though Bruce is a member of the Lions Club, he exemplifies the Rotary motto.

I, along with the City of Woodward, have such admiration for Bruce Benbrook as a community leader. He was named the Woodward Citizen of the Year in 1991. He has served as President of the Woodward Industrial Foundation and the Woodward Chamber of Commerce. As President of the Woodward Education Foundation, he was an advocate for K—12 and Higher Education. Bruce has also served as chairman of the Oklahoma State University Board of Regents, chairman of the Woodward Advisory Committee to the President of Northwestern Oklahoma State University, President of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, and chairman for the Oklahoma Higher Education Task Force on the Future of Higher Education. He established an Adopt-A-School Program and an After School Program for Woodward Public Schools. In addition, he was recognized for his continued support of High Plains Technology Center.

Bruce has been a major partner in bringing Higher Education to the Woodward community. In 2013, Bruce established the first lectureship and a scholarship program at the Woodward Campus of Northwestern Oklahoma State University. I do not believe that the Woodward Campus would be as successful without the support of Bruce Benbrook.

Bruce Benbrook is a great supporter of the arts and his efforts were honored in 2006 with the Earl Sneed Memorial Business Award from the Oklahoma Arts Council. He cares deeply about the "Quality of Life" in the state of Oklahoma. He has served as chairman of Oklahoma Tomorrow. He is currently the chairman-elect of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and Gaylord-Pickens Museum, a prestigious honor and vote of confidence from his peers.



# Northwestern

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Recently, he received Leadership Oklahoma's highest award, 2019 Distinguished Graduate Award and has been selected to the Oklahoma State University Hall of Fame. Both of these honors are well-deserved and in recognition of his accomplishments and his outstanding achievements in his life of service, in his professional life, and in his personal life.

I realize this is a long recommendation letter but his accomplishments span education, banking, arts, health, community, and state. His life has touched the lives of so many in our community and in our state.

In addition, Bruce is my banker of choice. In addition, Bruce Benbrook, as CEO, has propelled Stock Exchange Bank as a recognized bank of integrity, ethical standards, and public service in our community and our state. He has served as President of the Oklahoma Bankers Association and in numerous capacities at the federal level with the American Bankers Association. His reputation as a "banker" is impeccable statewide.

It is for the reasons I have outlined, with supporting evidence (believe me there is so much more in the way of recognition than was mentioned in this letter of recommendation), that I highly support the selection of Bruce T. Benbrook into the Oklahoma Bankers 2019 Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,



Deena K. Fisher, Ed.D.

Dean of the Woodward Campus